

## **1 - Premises Supported by Literature Review**

Premise 1:

**The organizational narrative of biomedical activist groups, like Autism Speaks, melodramatically introduced and perpetuates a duality of good (treatments, cure) and evil (autism, suffering) and dominates the news media and public consciousness** (*Broderick & Ne'eman, 2008; Heilker & King, 2010; Waltz, 2008*).

Premise 2:

**The organizational narrative of disability rights groups, like the Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN) and the Autistic Freedom Fights (AFF), consciously create a counter-narrative to the dominant narrative and are a minority perspective present in the news media and public consciousness** (*Barton, 2007; Broderick & Ne'eman, 2008; Haller, 2006; Heilker, personal communications, April 20, 2011; King, personal communication; April 20, 2011*).

Premise 3:

**Organizational narratives and counter-narratives eclipse Others' perspectives** (*Boje, 2007*) **on disability** (*Barton, 2007*), **such as autism** (*King, personal communication, April 20, 2011*), **from public consciousness.**

Premise 4:

**We can recoup the antenarratives (or pre-stories) of organizational narratives and counter-narratives by identifying Others' perspectives through rhetorical analysis** (*Boje, 2001*).

Premise 5:

**The moral imagination of individuals can be stimulated by the re-presence of Others' human stories, enabling rhetorical listening and collaborative sociopolitical action** (*Booth, 2005; Ratcliff, 2005*) **in our organizational** (*Boje, 2001*) **and individual communicative acts** (*Tompkins, 2009*).

## 2 - Research Questions

RQ1:

As the narrative and counter-narrative of autism activist groups develop over time, do the narratives become more polarizing in theme (warrants, *topoi*) and language?

RQ2:

Does the polarization of organizational narratives of autism obscure the presence of Other autism stakeholders from public consciousness and can their perspectives be regained through an analysis of antenarrative?

### 3 - Online Artifacts for Analysis

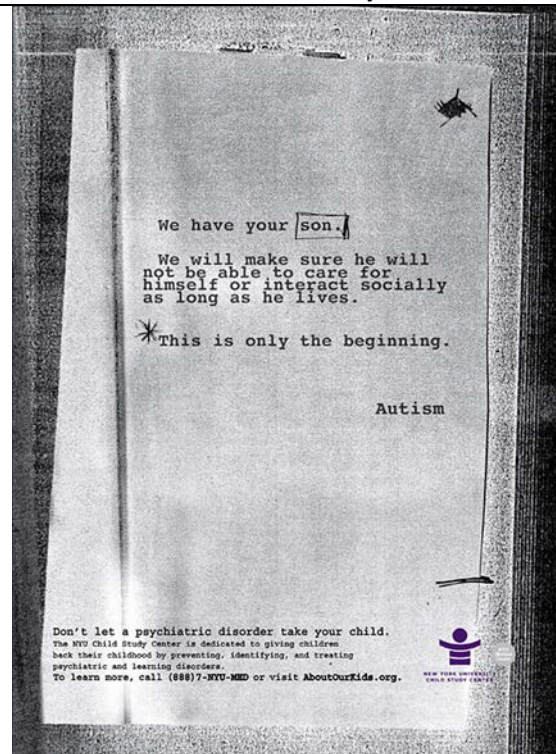
	<b>Narrative (biomedical)</b>	<b>Counter-narrative (neurodiversity)</b>	<b>Antenarratives</b>
Documentary film	"Autism Every Day" (2006)		Individual comments and blogs online
Ransom Notes (2007) controversy	Ransom Notes publicity campaign	Letter writing campaign	Individual comments and blogs online
Documentary film		"Positively Autistic" (2008)	Individual comments and blogs online
"I Am Autism" (2009) controversy	"I Am Autism" film	"I Am [Hatred]" and other parody videos	Individual comments and blogs online

#### **4 - Method**

1. focus on themes, arguments, and language that have come to identify the positions of the autism community (advocates for biomedical solutions to autism) and the autistic community (self-advocates for societal changes that accommodate neurodiversity)
2. analyze dominate narrative artifacts (Ransom Notes publicity campaign, “Autism Every Day,” and “I Am Autism”) to describe identity of the autism community
3. analyze counter-narrative artifacts (letter writing campaign, “Positively Autistic,” and “I Am [Hatred]”) to describe identify of the autistic community
4. analyze online responses to the narrative and counter-narrative artifacts (comments, blogs) for antenarratives (pre-narratives) that express experiences and identities that do not fit into the positions of the autism community or the autistic community
5. discuss how antenarrative may be recouped through rhetorical listening to create a new, more nuanced understanding of autism

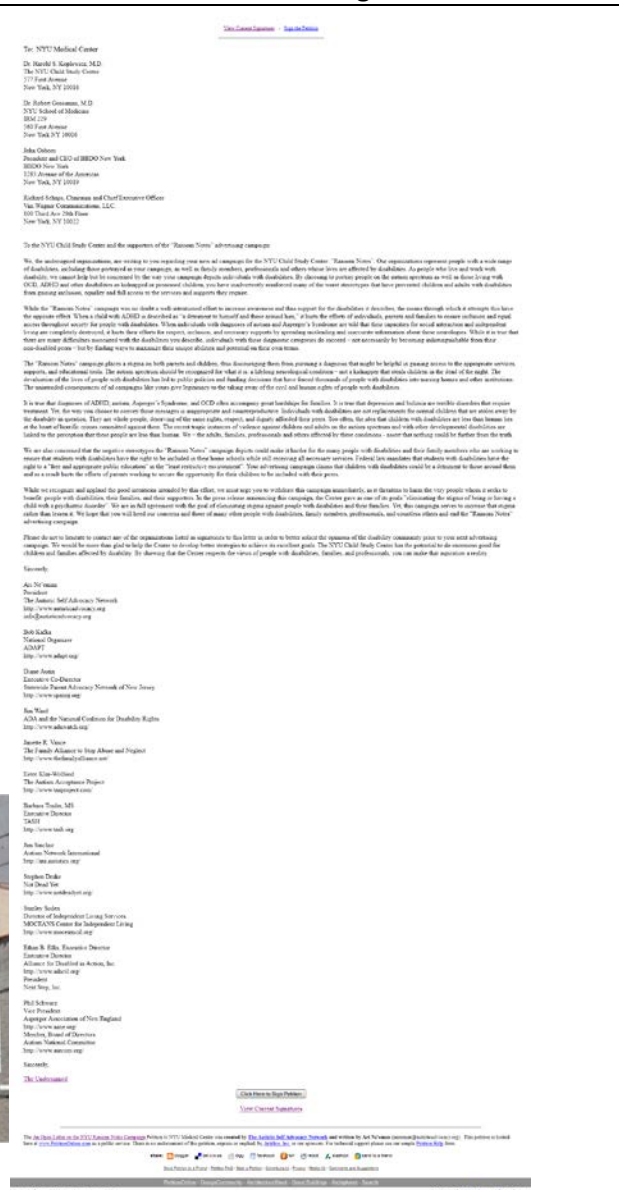
## 5 – Preliminary Results

**A. Ransom Notes ad campaign (2007)**  
**NYU Child Study Center**



From press release:  
 “12 million American children and adolescents face daily **battles** with psychiatric disorders”  
 “Left untreated, these illnesses can hold children **hostage**”  
 “12 million kids are held **hostage** by a psychiatric disorder.”










**Letter Writing campaign (2007)**  
**coalition of autism rights activists**







1376 total signatures

From letter:

"While it is true that there are many ***difficulties*** associated with the disabilities you describe, individuals with those diagnostic categories do ***succeed***—not necessarily by becoming indistinguishable from their non-disabled peers—but by finding ways to maximize their ***unique abilities*** and ***potential*** on their ***own terms.***"

B. "Autism Every Day" documentary (2006) Autism Speaks	"Positively Autistic" (2008) CBC News "The National"
Five mothers of autistic children share their stories of fear, frustration, sadness, divorce, money troubles, and inappropriate schooling.	Three autistic adults and one mother of an autistic child share their experiences as advocates for autism rights and the stereotypes that stigmatize them and limit their sociopolitical inclusion.
    	   

<p><b>C. “I Am Autism” film (2009)</b> <b>Autism Speaks</b></p>	<p><b>“I Am [Hatred]” video (2009)</b> <b>ooohprettycolors</b></p>
<p>“Autism” character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• single male threatening voice</li> <li>• sound effects add to isolation and threat</li> <li>• words: “invisible,” “I work very quickly,” “I will fight to take away your hope”</li> </ul> <p>imagery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• isolated children with autism</li> <li>• large outdoor spaces</li> <li>• stereotyped behaviors, a few faint smiles</li> </ul> 	<p>“Hatred” character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• synthesized voice</li> <li>• appropriated words: “I will bankrupt you,” “I will make sure your marriage fails,” “I derive great pleasure out of your loneliness”</li> <li>• added words: “I will make sure that when your children grow up, society will have no place for them. No home, no school, no job, no friends”</li> </ul> <p>imagery</p> 
<p>“Autism Community” character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• multiple, sometimes overlapping voices</li> <li>• sound effects add to community and victory</li> <li>• words: “we will spend every waking hour trying to weaken you,” “don’t need sleep,” “we are a community of warriors”</li> </ul> <p>imagery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• groups of interactive, smiling, loving people supporting the children with autism</li> <li>• closer focus on groups of people so that the largeness of space is minimized</li> <li>• more “neurotypical” behaviors, such as smiles, laughs, touching, interacting with others</li> </ul> 	<p>“Autistic Community” character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• synthesized voice</li> <li>• appropriated words: “you can push me off this horse time and time again, but I will get up, climb back on, and ride on with the message.”</li> <li>• added words: “The message that I am Autistic, and I am human,” “We speak, type, point, sing, flap, and squeal,” “Autistics speak”</li> </ul> <p>imagery</p> 



## D. Antenarratives

### Individual blogs

# AUTISM'S GADFLY

WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' NEURODIVERSITY

SHORT STORIES  
NON-FICTION  
NEURODIVERSITY: JUST SAY NO  
UNDIAGNOSING GATES, JEFFERSON, EINSTEIN

Showing newest posts for query **ransom notes**. [Show older posts](#)

PLACES OF INTEREST

- Undiagnosing Gates, Jefferson and Einstein
- The neuroleptic the mouse trap talking brains smash the spectrum
- Neurodiversity: Just say no my web page
- midnight in chicago
- Michelle Dawson TMOI comment board
- hating autism
- Follow me on twitter
- dragons rule space
- down with legitimised deceit
- cracking the enigma
- autistic aphorisms
- autism speaks
- autism jabberwocky
- autism in NB
- autism crisis
- age of autism

ABOUT ME

**JONATHAN MITCHELL**

An Autistic who wishes a cure could be found, though I know that might not happen in my lifetime. I try to mostly show what a scam neurodiversity is

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2010

### interesting petition from Ari Ne'eman and ASAN

I see that Ari Ne'eman (as well as I presume the rest of the members of the autistic self advocacy network) have taken umbrage at republican senatorial candidate Sharron Angle's controversial remarks about autism and insurance mandates, where she implies that some persons may be faking autism. ASAN is now circulating an online petition urging Angle to apologize for her remarks.

It seems to this blogger the majority of ASAN's advocacy activities are aimed at telling the world how easily offended they are and just trying to claim people should not be offensive rather than actually doing something to help disabled people function better in the world or fighting for abuse such as what happens at Judge Rotenberg center. The Ransom notes campaign from a couple of years ago is the most well-known of these examples. If everyone spent as much time crusading anytime a remark that they found offensive was said, no one would get any work done during the day and the world's activities would grind to a halt.

Since Ari Ne'eman and ASAN insist that Angle apologize for remarks that they don't like how about if they apologize to me for remarks and activities that I find offensive.

I find it offensive that they would state that curing autism is morally reprehensible. That they would spend time on the Zachary Price case after saying that no criminal should get a free pass because of autism. I am offended that they would claim they never said that autism was not a disability and after I produced Ne'eman's essay they would make a pathetic attempt at damage control and edit the essay, then admit it was a mistake to phrase things in the essay the way they did, then delete it from their site altogether. I find it offensive that Ne'eman, (a 21-year-old kid at the time) had never worked in a job of any sort and would claim that the solution for reducing employment among autistics was to eliminate social pleasantries as a criteria for hiring and a good job

“We don’t need no stinkin’ neurodiversity”

“Since Ari Ne’eman and ASAN insist that Angle apologize for remarks that they don’t like how about if they apologize to me for remarks an activities that I find offensive. I find it offensive that they would state that curing autism is morally reprehensible.”

“I find it offensive that Ne’eman, (a 21-year-old kid at the time) had never worked in a job of any sort and would claim that the solution for reducing employment among autistics was to eliminate social pleasantries as a criteria for hiring and a good job evaluation. This is particularly offensive after I have been fired something like 20 times, forced to resign from other jobs in more marginal situations and tried to make a living more years that Ne’eman has been alive.”

### Comments to others

The screenshot shows a forum thread on the website 'WrongPlanet.net'. The thread is titled 'Calling All Advocates' and is part of a discussion about autism advocacy. The user 'Jonathan Mitchell' is the main contributor, posting multiple replies. The thread includes various links and references to autism advocacy groups and individuals. The user 'Jonathan Mitchell' is the main contributor, posting multiple replies. The thread includes various links and references to autism advocacy groups and individuals.

“There’s also local organizations that do great things, but do not get national recognition. Or, they aspire to do great things but lack the resources.”

“Heta, thanks for that considered post. I’ve thought for sometime there’s far too much internet talk and too little real world action. I am a member of the UK’s National Autistic Society, a mainly NT organization, but it spends around 100 million pounds a year for the benefit of autistics. I’ve yet to hear of an autistic led organization spending as much as a pound on autistics.”

“That’s a silly way to look at it. I assume you are in fact a person. Perhaps one would like to identify with humanity more than with a neurological configuration. But I guess if you really feel you need to define yourself according to that label...”



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